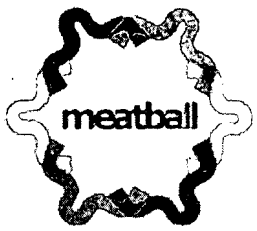
OpenProcess



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In a community, often certain members are responsible for things that others are not, say through PeerPrivilege or political ClassStriation. However, without PeerReview, these individuals may not live up to the standards of the rest of the community. Or, without feedback from the people they affect, they may not do the best job. Further, without informing others of what they are doing, the rest of the community will have no idea what's going on.

Therefore, keep processes open. If possible, make it impossible to close the process, even through a TechnologySolution. For instance, make all vote results public. Or publish transcripts. For instance, the JabberProject's jdev groupchat is automatically archived at http://perl.jabber.org/logs/conference.jabber.org/jdev/. Or use an AuditTrail of the members' actions.

As a further advantage, an OpenProcess educates new members on how the community is run. After all, they can watch RoleModels act. If they are of the same class, they will learn what the CommunityExpectations are of them. For instance, on a wiki, new members might watch others refactor threaded content down to DocumentMode, so they understand this is how we keep things clean around here.

An OpenProcess also forestalls the creation of a negative RumourMill, which might otherwise be created by seeing politically salient and related events become only visible in little spurts, often appearning as a non-sequitor to those outside the know (cf. KuleshovEffect).

But, sometimes totally open processes can cause delays as people disagree vehemently over basic fundamental issues. Democracy moves slow, after all.

The opposite process is the BackRoomDecision, which is worth reading as well.

See also FairProcess, OnlineDiary.

Example: Change history teaches how to edit

One nice use of KeptPages is showing the full VersionHistory of a reworking for review if the editor saves frequently enough. Then others can see how to do this. A particular skillful editor like WardCunningham is often entertaining to watch in my experience. The rather limited lifetime of the revision history also makes it more artful, in the way that open air concerts only happen once.

Normaly RecentChanges only shows the last change for every page, this is why repeated changes to the same page are no problem -- it shows up only once. It is only when people start to use the all=1 parameter that they get to see every single edit. [1] But then again, they asked for it.

The case of Badvogato.

On [Badvogato], the user nicknamed lkcl was denied access to the site due to a bug in the TrustMetric. However, since the operation of the site is perceived to be the black hand of the site admin, nicknamed crackmonkey, hidden in the backroom shadows, the immediate assumption was that lkcl was muzzled. The fact that Badvogato was run from a Northpoint DSL connection that was [abruptly disconnected] only created the impression that lkcl's IP was blackholed. This lead to a little [flame] posted by lkcl from a bogus account (hey, LoginsAreEvil; they aren't security) and a [response] clarifying the situation.

If, on the other hand, the actions of the site administrators were transparent (or more accurately, the site's code), it would be obvious to everyone that the problem wasn't personal, but technical. But the guesswork leads to assumptions which in turn only exaggerates nascent feelings.

MeatballWiki.

Similarly, on MeatballWiki, people have presumed that the site administrators can do things magically from the back end. While CliffordAdams can, as he actually runs the script, SunirShah cannot. Sunir doesn't even have nor wants the administrator password to the UseModWiki script running MeatballWiki. And if Cliff did screw with the site, Sunir would slap him. (Actually, if we were all lawyers, it's also true that Sunir owns the site in such a way that Cliff can't just screw with the site.) Sunir and Cliff provide checks and balances against each other, except when they collude with each other. Fortunately, they disagree on just about everything. ;)

Ideally, one main goal is to decentralize much of the control of the site to the community. There's no way the GodKings, even if they are BenevolentDictators, can scale, so it's up to the community to run itself.

WhyClublet.

This open policy isn't baked into the technical architecture. It's an entirely social choice. To see a wiki with a much opposite policy, compare WhyClublet where the "forum hosts" [reserve the right] to backroom tinkering because they think it's the best way to keep things rolling, which might be true in their case as it is a discussion/debate forum over religion, a contentious issue. Then again, there is AndStuffWiki. Maybe it's all about what you want.

> *From [Why Clublet Editorial Policy v. 20]...*
>
> I am much more interested in encouraging quality than the number of contributions here. I wouldn't mind the contributions increasing, if they are ones that both Keith and I agree are of a reasonable quality (and we have been quite up front about our role in assessing quality, right from the start). The reason: there are too many stupid and negative debates about Christianity everywhere one looks on the net. -- RichardDrake, WhyClublet Forum Host
>
> *From [Why Clublet Gripes and Moans v. 13]...*
>
> You don't have to like the content on this clublet. You don't have to like our editorial policy, or even that we have one. You don't have to be here at all. If you do choose to contribute, (and, if you do, thanks) be aware that you do so as part of a community with norms. One norm is that we just can't be bothered with [...] squabbling about done deals past and gone. This clublet is here now, it is the way it is, and it is not going to vanish up its own introspective fundament. I won't let it. Now, stop reading this page and go write something intelligent, challenging, and interesting. Thank you. -- KeithBraithwaite, WhyClublet Forum Host

Sky Marshalls

http://www.salon.com/people/feature/2002/02/20/bizzaro/index1.html

People on planes now believe hijackers want to crash the plane. Consequently, they don't take security threats as passively as before, fearing that they will be killed if they don't act. When undercover sky marshalls seize control of the plane, how do the passengers know they are sky marshalls? ID only works if people are familiar with the ID, and it is non-forgeable, neither property is true of sky marshall ID. Not knowing any better, yet acting in the mutual interest of the marshall, the passengers may seize control of the plane from the sky marshalls, possibly violently.

This means that a sky marshall may be killed by either criminals or citizens he or she has sworn to protect, making it **very important** never to announce that you're a sky marshall even if you are.

Sunshine Laws

Also called *open meeting laws.*

Many democratic governments have laws mandating that all meetings of elected officials be open to the public. This gets the discussion out in the open, permits participation, and helps journalists and the public better understand the dynamics of those who have been given power. In the United States, sunshine laws gained initial prominence after a proliferation of back-room dealmaking in Chicago in the 1960s. They have come to be nearly universal in local government.

Online communities should bring in the sunshine as well. While there is a role for one-on-one private communication, having a hidden forum of any kind for community leaders stifles discussion and participation. Just as in MeatSpace, members who are not in the know can walk into a discussion where it seems like everyone already agrees and the conversation is already finished. They are, effectively, disenfranchised.

Closed on-line meetings can take many forms. Deliberately closed portions of a community are rare but not unheard of. Sometimes prominent community members may participate in some separate community and discuss weighty matters there in relative privacy. Other more personal technologies, such as instant messaging and IRC, may be used to the exclusion of the bulk of the community. In more global communities, time zone differences may play a role.

> *But this also means that online community members should refrain from hidden conversations using for example e-mail or chat. These conversations may hold important information that is lacking other contributors to understand actions, emotions or decisions.*

Bilderberg Group

Purportedly created to give powerful people in the Western civilization an informal place to meet and talk in confidence and privacy, without the fear of public repurcussions, the Bilderberg Group has collected its share of conspiracy theories, not without justification. It is infamously secretive, with very scant trace of its existence in the public world except for news stories and gossip. It has no public front, and even its voice mail message is secretive. This creates major anxiety, as it seems to skirt around the democratic checks and balances we so painfully constructed in this civilization. As this [article]

summarizes, the plan to invade Iraq was something discussed openly in 2002 at one such meeting long before the idea entered public awareness. (And long before "weapons of mass destruction" intelligence was made public). Certainly it failed to prevent a war in that case, and many have long felt that the weapons of mass destruction evidence was manufactured to post hoc justify the decision to invade Iraq.

What makes an OpenProcess:

- Transparency - all communications and decisions are public and archived, so anyone interested may get all information
- No time constraints - all decisions (democratic or not) are suggested or announced a reasonable timespan before they become effective. So there is still time for discussion and even last minute intervention.
- Participation - in principle (this opens the chance for restrictions in case of problems) anyone is welcome to participate (discussions, decisions *and* work)
- Reflection and reversibility - any decision may be reversed if the results are not as expected.
- Tolerance - any system or process should have the flexibility in the application of its - necessary - rules
- ...

I think the TourBus - at a very small scale - implements such a process. Although there is enough potential for conflicts, there hasn't been a single conflict in the process up to now. -- HelmutLeitner

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In an OpenProcess newcomers and the community help each other by Synergy:

If a newcomer asks questions in public, this is a very valuable contribution to the community. At the same time, answering the questions in public has the same value, because it doesn't only help the newcomer but also the community to make its resources more userfriendly and helps to avoid duplication of work for the community and each other newcomer. So the newcomers help the community and each other newcomers. Strictly speaking, the newcomer is as soon a part of the community as s/he asks the first question in public. This is a great synergy-effect. -- [fridemar]

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